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ABSTRACT

Changes in college students' career aspirations and attitudes were examined to ascertain student ideas for new directions in career counseling services. Subjects were 130 female and 66 male first-year students who completed a Role Modeling in College Survey during Fall 1979. The women were found to be as career-committed as the men, while concurrently shifting toward nontraditional majors and careers. Men were less influenced by female instructors than were females by male instructors in terms of role modeling. Correlation data revealed a uniformly low degree of influence by university personnel on student career choice certainty. Students recommended that counselors: (1) help departments establish mentoring systems; (2) arrange fieldwork experiences; (3) stage career days and seminars; (4) identify role models among university faculty and personnel; (5) organize student support groups; (6) conduct symposia aimed at identifying sexist behaviors; and (7) maintain resource files on campus programs and personnel, and alumni who were employed in atypical jobs relative to their college majors. (Author/HLM)

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Implications for College Counselors of Women's Changing Career Aspirations and Role Modeling Needs

Vicki M. Wilson and Patricia W. Lunneborg

Abstract

To document changes in college students' career aspirations and attitudes, and to ascertain student ideas for new directions in counseling, 103 women and 66 men first year students were administered a "Role Modeling in College Survey" Fall 1979. The women were found to be as career-committed and certain as the men, and at the same time shifting towards nontraditional majors and careers. The ten suggestions they made for expanding traditional counseling activities to facilitate their career development are presented. As far as role modeling was concerned, the women were more influenced by other sex instructors than were the men. And as for the degree to which University personnel influence students' career certainty, uniformly low correlations seemed to say, they do not.

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Implications for College Counselors of Women's Changing Career Aspirations and Role Modeling Needs

Fitzgerald and Crites (1980) recently concluded that the biased attitudes of counselors towards women's career aspirations had been so thoroughly documented that reciting the classic studies was superfluous. They seemed to advocate an activist position wherein counselors' sex-bias-free values were actually used in the counseling process as a curative factor. They suggested that a first step toward meeting this challenge was a module in counselor training programs.

The present study went to the consumer, the college student, to ask, how else might college counselors meet the challenge of encouraging women to broaden their work options? To this end it sought (1) to verify the changing aspirations of today's college students, particularly women, and (2) to determine specific behavioral steps, not unlike the idea to sensitize counselors in training, counselors could take to facilitate students' career development.

Like past counselor bias, women's changing attitudes with respect to the importance of careers are well-documented. In contrast to Empey's (1958) finding that 80% of a sample of high school seniors preferred marriage over career, Blaska's (1978) comprehensive review of research concluded from 50 to 70 percent of first year college women and from 50 to 90 percent of senior women wanted a career.

Secondly, the study investigated role modeling in college, with an eye towards possible sex differences. Do university personnel influence the degree of students' career certainty? Are same or other sex role models equally influential?

Method

Subjects. Subjects were a volunteer sample of 103 female and 66 male University of Washington introductory psychology students. Sixty-seven percent were first year students, the remainder second-year students. They were administered the questionnaire autumn 1979 in small groups.

Questionnaire: A "Role Modeling in College Survey" (Wilson and Lunneborg, 1979) consisting of 30 items was constructed with items in five areas: background data (6 items), role modeling (7 items), sex roles

(6 items), certainty of career plans (4 items), college environment (7 times). Most items were multiple-choice with two to five options. Those that were not were Likert-scaled items such as "How important is a successful career to you?" with a score range from 1 to 25, or open-ended items, one of which asked for suggestions for how the University could provide more role models for career development.

Data analysis. Survey responses were coded on mark-sense data sheets and all programming for descriptive and inferential statistics came from the SPSS manual (Nie et al, 1975). Percentages and means were calculated separately for each sex on each item and χ^2 and t-tests used when applicable.

Results on Changing Career Aspirations

Aspirations were examined with 3 open-ended items on planned major, career choice, and career goal five years post graduation and with three forced-choice items on certainty of major and career choice, and highest degree aspired to. Attitudes toward the importance of career, marriage, and children and perceived comfort pursuing a nontraditional career were addressed through four Likert-scaled items. Two forced-choice items assessed attitudes toward the importance of adherence to traditional sex roles and university affirmative action policies. A final open-ended item invited suggestions for how the University could facilitate students' career goals.

As for their aspirations, planned majors and planned career choices were classified according to Roe's (1956) eight occupational groupings. Significant sex differences were found for both planned major ($\chi^2 = 32.15$, $p < .001$) and planned career ($\chi^2 = 39.52$, $p < .001$). From Table 1 it can be seen that the most notable sex differences favored women in Service, Business Contact and Science interest, and favored men in Organizational and Technical interest. However, the position of service relative to the other areas should be noted: The careers being planned by these women were, in descending order: Science (32%), Organization (19%), Business Contact (13%), General Cultural (13%), Service (11%), Arts and Entertainment (10%), Technical (2%), and Outdoor (0%).

These planned major and career choices were also classified as traditional or nontraditional, with nontraditional defined as $\leq$25% of an area's baccalaureate degrees conferred on a given sex during 1975-76, and as $\leq$25% of a given sex employed in a specific area during 1977 (Vetter, Babco, and McIntire, 1978). Again, significant sex differences were found in the

Table 1

Major and Career Choices of First and Second Year Women and Men Undergraduates, Fall 1979

Area of interest in Roe framework	Percentages			
	Major[1]		Career Choice[1]	
	Women (n = 99)	Men (n = 60)	Women (n = 93)	Men (n = 60)
Service	12	0	11	0
Business Contact	11	2	13	3
Organization	19	28	19	24
Technical	3	27	2	30
Outdoor	0	0	0	3
Science	31	20	32	15
General Cultural	15	13	13	13
Arts & Entertainment	9	10	10	12

[1]Chi-square tests on frequencies for both major and career choice between men and women significant at the .001 level.

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numbers of each sex for both major ($\chi^2 = 26.19$, $p < .001$) and career ($\chi^2 = 19.97$, $p < .001$). While the male students remained staunchly traditional in their choices, women were broadening their options to include male dominated areas (see Table 2). Forty percent of the female sample elected a nontraditional major and 30% a nontraditional career.

Approximately equal percentages of the sexes were certain (fairly or very) of their planned major (79% female, 73% male) and career (72% both sexes) choices. Nearly three-fourths had a fairly well established future direction early in their collegiate career.

What about long range aspirations? Responses to "career goal five years post graduation" were classified as either containing career imagery (advancement, reaching goals, success, etc.) or job imagery (make good money, security, straight job title). Here again the sexes did not differ. Over half of each group's responses reflected career imagery. Lastly, no

Table 2

Sex Differences in Career Aspirations of College Women and Men

Aspiration	Percentages[1] Women	Men
Major choice traditional	60	98***
Major choice nontraditional	40	2
Major choice certainty "not sure"	21	27
Major choice certainty "fairly sure"	43	38
Major choice certainty "very sure"	36	35
Career choice traditional	70	100***
Career choice nontraditional	30	0
Career choice certainty "not sure"	28	28
Career choice certainty "fairly sure"	42	49
Career choice certainty "very sure "	30	23
Degree aspirations bachelor's	36	33
Degree aspiration master's	37	35
Degree aspiration PhD or professional degree	27	32
Long-range aspiration, career	55	52
Long-range aspiration, job	39	43
Long-range aspiration, undecided	6	5

[1]Actual frequencies varied from 90 to 103 for women, from 59 to 66 for men.

***$p < .001$

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sex differences were found for degree aspirations (see Table 2).

What about the career attitudes of this sample? Table 3 illustrates there were no sex differences on the absolute importance of career, children, and marriage. All three were uniformly highly important to both women and men. The sexes agreed on their ranking of importance of the areas--career highest followed by marriage and then children. The differences between areas were, however, quite small. Their ratings indicated that for a

majority of these women, having a career was not only very important, but of slightly more importance than marriage or children.

How did the sexes feel about traditional roles? A significant sex difference ($p < .0001$) was found in attitude toward the importance of adhering to traditional sex roles, females being more liberal (Table 3). A significant difference was also found for how comfortable the sexes would be employed in a nontraditional field ($p < .0001$), women indicating they would be more comfortable. Lastly, as a measure of their commitment to broadening career options for both sexes, the sample was asked to rate the importance of a strong university affirmative action policy. Again a significant sex difference ($p < .0001$) resulted, the women holding a more liberal attitude.

Table 3

Sex Differences in Career Attitudes of College Women and Men

Attitude	Means (and SDs)	
	Women	Men
Importance of career[1]	18.9 (2.9)	19.4 (2.7)
Importance of marriage[1]	18.3 (4.3)	18.5 (3.0)
Importance of childrer[1]	17.0 (4.1)	17.4 (3.2)
Unimportance of adhering to tra traditional sex roles[2]	3.2 (.8)	2.7 (.8)***
Comfort with holding nontraditional career[1]	15.0 (5.2)	10.6 (4.9)***
Importance of affirmative action policies at colleges[2]	2.7 (.9)	2.0 (.8)***

[1]Scaled from 1 to 25.

[2]Scaled from 1 to 4

***$p < .0001$

To summarize then, the women in this sample showed strong evidence of shifting interests, away from Service and General Cultural and towards Science, Organization, and Business Contact. Goodly numbers of them were planning to enter male-dominated majors and careers. They were just as certain of their

plans and just as career committed in the long range as their male peers. No differences were found in their degree aspirations. And when it came to the relative importance to them of career vs. marriage and children, no sex differences were evident.

The ways in which the women did depart from the men, however, had to do with their attitudes towards adhering to traditional sex roles and affirmative action policies, the women being far more liberal than the men. It is instructive now to conclude with a summary of their suggestions for the University to better meet their needs for career guidance.

New Directions for Counselors

(1) The most frequently made suggestion is something counselors can do little about: the University should hire more female faculty in non-traditional areas.

(2) Counselors could consult with departments regarding establishing departmental mentoring systems for putting women undergraduates in touch with peers, graduate students, and faculty, ideally other women, in their area of interest.

(3) Counselors could work towards establishing fieldwork opportunities at the college and departmental levels in addition to the individual level, wherein the counselor helps the client arrange fieldwork for the purpose of experiencing an intended career field.

(4) Counselors could sponsor, organize, and stage career days, seminars, workshops, symposia, etc., the idea being to present to college students women working in areas other than teaching, nursing and office work.

(5) Counselors, especially advisors of first year and pre-major students, should encourage women to visit departmental advisors in their prospective majors to get information. Counselors could consult with departmental advisors to arrange special meetings to introduce prospective majors to the department early.

(6) Counselors can give clients directions and advice on locating role models to learn from who will, in turn, serve to combat the largeness and impersonal character of the University.

(7) Counselors could organize student support groups--women in the sciences, returning women, single parents, women planning graduate studies

in law, etc. and teach students how to maintain support groups on their own.

(8) Counselors could, together with faculty members, conduct consciousness-raising symposia aimed at pinpointing the sexism that prevails in speaking, writing, and in interacting with students. Major points of the symposia could be written up for campus-wide publications in order to reach a wider audience.

(9) Counselors, in collaboration with the administration, could conduct an orientation to college that reaches all entering students and includes an introduction to campus career resources (places, people, information).

(10) Counselors and advisors could have resource files of alumni employed in jobs typical and atypical of different majors who would be willing to talk to students about their work.

Results on Role Modeling in College

College influences on students' career certainty. Table 4 presents the correlations for the total sample between six predictors and six criteria of career certainty. As can be seen, the items written to measure the influence of faculty and staff were uncorrelated with the criteria. Either this is the result of a true lack of correlation between the two or is due to methodological difficulties. Inasmuch as criteria number 6, 7, and 8 were combined to produce criterion 10, the career composite certainty score, their high correlations with it are spurious. However, one could conclude that "career importance" seems the most promising of the six criteria for future research.

Table 5 presents the means and standard deviations for six sources of influence on students' decision making. The exclusion of departmental male and female instructors from the correlational analysis was due to their scarcity in this particular sample, however, here we see that women instructors in students' major departments were having significantly greater influence on them than they did on male students. Similarly, women noninstructional staff were having more influence on women students than men students.

Sex differences in role modeling in college. The results which bear on role modeling in college are at best suggestive. But what the data did reveal may provide direction for future research in this area.

Table 4

Correlations between Predictors and Criteria of Career Certainty

(Decimal points omitted)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
(1) Faculty traditionality towards women	52**	04	-11	-19*	-00	-01	01	-07	-02	06	-04
(2) Faculty traditionality towards men		00	-16*	-13	-00	-04	-08	03	-09	-03	-15
(3) Female instructor influence			48**	27**	25**	03	-04	04	03	-04	-12
(4) Male instructor influence				16*	33**	04	-07	-03	04	-03	17*
(5) Female staff influence					44**	14	-03	-06	06	03	-07
(6) Male staff influence						06	-07	-17*	-00	-03	08
(7) Major certainty							61**	12	80**	20*	14
(8) Career certainty								15	80**	24**	27**
(9) Career imagery post-graduation									54**	13	18*
(10) Composite certainty score										24**	34**
(11) Educational aspiration											17*
(12) Career importance											

* $\rho < .05$

** $\rho < .01$

Table 5

Influence of Six Groups of University Personnel

Upon Students Career-Decision Making

	Means (Stan. Dev.)	
	Female students	Male students
Departmental male instructor influence	4.5 (1.3)	4.4 (1.0)
Departmental female instructor influence	4.5 (1.4)	4.0 (0.7)*
University male instructor influence	4.4 (1.2)	4.3 (0.8)
University female instructor influence	4.5 (1.2)	4.2 (0.9)
Non-instructional male staff influence	4.3 (1.2)	4.2 (1.2)
Non-instructional female staff influence	4.6 (1.3)	4.1 (0.9)*

Note: Influence scaled 1 (strong negative) to 7 (strong positive).

* $p < .005$

First, only 4 of the 103 women listed a woman instructor as having an important influence on their career decisions. A χ^2 -test of the impact of same vs. other sex influential instructors was highly significant: women were more influenced by other sex instructors than were the men. Clearly, the men in this sample had a far greater opportunity for same sex models than did the women.

The only predictor which had an interpretable relationship with the criteria was the influence of a male instructor ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) upon career importance. What Table 4 does not reveal, however, was that this

r was accounted for entirely by the women ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) inasmuch as the correlation between the two variables was -.02 for the men. Perhaps this was a random event, but it might also reveal the fact that if these women were going to be influenced in their career planning, it had to be by men.

As far as non-instructional university personnel influence was concerned, there were no sex differences in the impact of same or other sex influencers. It was thus instructive to go back to the questionnaires and record just who these influential people had been. There were not many of them, only 30 students in all said they were so influenced. For women students, thirteen of their 21 influencers were female, and 8 of those 13 were advisors/counselors.

The men and women in this sample were in close agreement as to the expectations of the faculty as far as students' choice of occupation: faculty were thought to be somewhat liberal as far as the women were concerned (11.3 and 11.4 for women and men students, respectively. The midpoint was 12.5.) The men, however, were, significantly, ($p < .05$) more than the women, expected to enter traditional occupations such as engineering and business (faculty expectations were rated 17.7 by both males and females).

A worrisome finding in regard to the influence of male instructors on women's career planning is the fact that departmental male faculty were perceived by the women as holding <u>less regard</u> for them than men students perceived the male faculty held ($p < .05$).

New Directions for Research

Even were the "Role Modeling in College Survey" to remain unaltered, it would be better to administer it to a senior sample which had had greater exposure to possible role models in college. Presumably this change alone would have raised the correlations between predictors and criteria.

It should be noted that many in this sample did not define "role model" correctly (an open-ended item). The most common error was that a role model represented a stereotype of what the sexes should be. Thus, even using a senior sample, a future survey ought to, at the outset, define for students exactly what is meant by a role model and use examples.

Regarding the measurement of the concept of career certainty, it would appear that a more reliable measure would consist of the items on major certainty and career certainty redone in a Likert-scale format,

certainty of long range career goal likewise scaled, and these three scores combined with the fourth Likert-scaled item regarding career importance. The point is to have as many items measuring the same concept as possible for greater "scale" reliability.

As far as completely describing the role modeling that occurs during the college years, survey items must be added to tap the influence of people other than university personnel who are, during college, serving as role models for college students--parents, employers, co-workers, friends, spouses, etc. In addition to role modeling items, items regarding mentors during college should also be included to compare these two interpersonal processes. On the other hand, if we are primarily concerned with how the college environment affects career planning, then we must pay attention to variables other than the influence of people in that environment--type of college, residence status, size, affluence of one's peers, male-female ratio.

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